

**NEVADA STATE WELFARE DIVISION  
PUBLIC WORKSHOP ON KINSHIP CARE**

The Public Workshop on Kinship Care was brought to order by Nancy K. Ford, Welfare Administrator, at 9:00 a.m. on Tuesday, April 6, 2004, video-conferenced between the Legislature Building, 401 South Carson Street, Room 2134, Carson City, Nevada, and the Grant Sawyer State Building, 555 East Washington Avenue, Room 4412, Las Vegas, Nevada.

**STAFF PRESENT**

Nancy K. Ford, Administrator  
Gary Stagliano, Deputy Administrator, Program & Field Operations  
Leslie Danihel, Chief, Eligibility & Payments  
Sandee Wyand, Field Services Manager  
Vicki Kemp, TANF Program Specialist  
Cindy Fisher, Family Services Supervisor  
Louise Bush, Staff Specialist  
Lynette Giles, Executive Assistant  
Robin Roach, Administrative Assistant

**GUESTS PRESENT**

Pat Hedgcoth, Division of Child & Family Services  
Barbara Legier, Division of Child & Family Services  
Juanita Matz, Nevada Professionals Empowering Parents  
Ruth Harmon, Nevada Professionals Empowering Parents  
Margaret Ferrick, Nevada Professionals Empowering Parents  
Jolene Mash, Child Protective Services  
Jane Horner, Grandparents as Parents  
Will Horner, Grandparents as Parents

Ms. Ford opened the workshop at 9:00 a.m. and explained this meeting is being video-conferenced between Carson City and Las Vegas, along with being broadcast on the Internet. Changes to the Kinship Care Program will be discussed at the workshop, but no changes can be made because it requires a TANF State Plan change and changes to the State Plan require a 45-day public notice period.

**I. Kinship Care Program Workshop:**

Ms. Ford explained the Kinship Care Program went into effect on October 1, 2000. However, applicants were not added to the program until about February 2001 due to the need for legal guardianship and fingerprinting to be eligible for the program. Due to the terrorist attacks on September 11, 2001 and the resulting increase in the TANF cash assistance caseload, the Kinship Care Program payments had to be reduced. The program currently pays 90% of the state foster care rate and \$100 for each additional child, which substantially reduced the payments to recipients. In May 2003, an income test was adopted for both the Kinship Care and Non-Needy Caretaker Programs, due to more budget constraints. The income test adopted was 275% of the federal poverty or below. The 2004 Federal Poverty Rates are included in the handouts provided. Income levels at 275% and below are shown.

The Subcommittee on Kinship Care, of the Committee of Children, Youth and Families, held a meeting on March 23, 2004 and the subcommittee asked the Welfare Division to hold this meeting.

Ms. Ford stated there were several different suggestions given at the subcommittee meeting to change the Kinship Care Program. Suggestions included raising the age limit, raising the income test level rate and increasing the amount of the grant. Ms. Ford said all three options can not be implemented, as the budget for the Kinship Care Program will be exceeded. She asked for public input to find out what the preferences are for program changes.

Jane Horner, Grandparents As Parents, said she has not had the opportunity to discuss the proposed changes with any of the families she advocates for. She stated her personal preference is to fund the program at the same level before the reduction to the grant was made and if possible, would like to see 100% of foster care rates paid for all children in a family. Ms. Horner stated she knows the Kinship Care Program funding can be changed if there are budgetary issues again. She noted the younger caregivers would prefer to lower the age limit, but those already on the program would like the payment rates increased.

Ms. Ford explained a 45-day notice will be sent to make the proposed change to the TANF State Plan for the Kinship Care Program. Mrs. Horner said Allison Combs, Legislative Council Bureau Analyst, has the addresses of the people interested in possible changes to the program. Ms. Ford explained the mailing list for this Public Workshop included Senior Citizen Centers and was quite extensive.

Ms. Ford asked how many people were going to testify and she explained the change to the Kinship Care Program cannot be decided at this meeting. Juanita Matz, Nevada Professionals Encouraging Parents (PEP), stated she feels the Welfare Division cannot approve a "blanket" solution for the Kinship Care Program without more public input. In response to a question from Ms. Ford, Ms. Matz said the definition of a Kinship Care provider in the PEP Program is someone either related to the family or someone the family looks to as being a part of their family. There are many grandparents in the Las Vegas area taking care of children. The PEP Program received a system of care grant

a year ago, which will assist the county with targeting assistance for children with severe emotional problems who are being taken care of by kin. Ms. Ford asked what services are provided by the PEP Program. Ms. Matz replied the program wants to define the grant by just cash. There are five different neighborhood care centers in Southern Nevada to help these families with many different things.

Mrs. Horner said another grant was received by the county to help with respite care and other necessary services. This grant does not provide a cash grant to the families either. However, a survey is being conducted by the county to see what programs are available. Ms. Ford explained the Welfare Division has already completed the survey and returned it. Ms. Matz said the PEP Program only provides wrap-around services and would like to see the grant levels back to where they were when the program was originated.

Will Horner, Grandparents As Parents, said the people their organization has been working with are mostly over age 62 and has heard many bad things happening to these families, such as filing bankruptcy and placing the children in foster care. He also believes most grandparents are caring for more than one child. Bringing the grant level up to the original rate will help these families be able to live in a decent home and to house all of their family members. It seems there was much turmoil to these families when the previous cut was made. He stated families receiving the original grant amounts will be able to stay together.

Ms. Ford referred to the poverty level chart and stated increasing the income test to 300% of the federal poverty rate is also a possible change. The handout entitled "Kinship Care Cases" shows those cases not eligible at 275% of the federal poverty rates. Asterisked cases would qualify for the program at 300% of the federal poverty level. Ms. Ford then reviewed the impacts of decreasing the minimum age of the program and the raising the current payment rates. Ms. Ford stated she believes the program can afford to pay 90% of the state foster care rates for each child and not go over budget, but no other changes can be made to the program at this time.

Ms. Horner asked about the eligibility rate for grandparents who make under \$48,000 per year. Ms. Ford explained the monthly income chart and the maximum allowed income for a family of four is a bit over \$48,000 per year.

Ms. Ford asked the attendees for more input about the Kinship Care Program and stated she understands the main preference, at this point, is funding the program at the level of 90% of state foster care rates for each child. She also remarked younger caregivers can qualify the Non-needy Caretaker Program and Medicaid.

Mrs. Horner gave a brief overview of the program concept before it was passed by the Legislature and the need for an age limit when the bill was adopted. A discussion ensued regarding the age limit for the Kinship Care Program. Ms. Ford urged those who do not meet the income limit criteria to apply for Medicaid as they may be eligible.

A discussion ensued regarding the different state funding streams and the possibility of the Kinship Care Program being administered from different funding areas.

Mrs. Horner thanked Ms. Ford for working with families on the program and expressed appreciation for everything she has done for the Kinship Care Program.

Ms. Ford said the sentiment at this meeting is to raise grant levels to 90% of the state foster care rate for all children and make other changes if funding becomes available. She will propose this change to the TANF State Plan at a public hearing. An agenda for the public hearing will be scheduled some time in June.

## **II. General Public Comments:**

None received.

Ms. Ford thanked those in attendance for their participation in this workshop. Hearing no further comments, she closed the public workshop at 9:28 a.m.